

Once upon a time, there lived a handsome prince in the city of Northington, England. He had many court jesters to amuse him and he threw parties of all sorts, but as he grew older he felt that something was missing from his life. He spoke about this to both the King and the Queen. Neither had any answers as to where the problem lay.

One afternoon the prince realized what he was missing in his life, a princess! So the prince and his court of advisors traveled around the surrounding countryside in search of a suitable wife and found many willing admirers. However, the young ladies who claimed to be princesses in fact turned out to be simple farm girls. Soon the prince became disheartened. He ordered the travelers to take him back to his castle in Northington.

When he returned, he told the King and Queen of his failure to find a real princess and they comforted him as best they could. One evening there was a terrific thunderstorm with so much rain and blinding lightening that the castle dwellers were fearful for their lives. During the chaos, there was a knock heard at the main gate of the castle. The prince ran to the gate and opened it against the torrential deluge to find a young girl standing there. She was dripping wet and shaking with the wind. The prince invited her to come inside the castle.

She told the prince that she was a princess who had become lost in the storm, and she needed shelter until the storm subsided. The prince did not believe she was a princess because she was such a sight after being blown by the storm! However, he invited her to stay the night and the Queen made sleeping arrangements.

The Queen told the prince that she knew of a way to determine whether the young girl was indeed a princess. She stacked twenty mattresses on top of one another. Then she inserted a small pea between the bottom two. If the girl could feel the pea as she slept, then she was a real princess.

The next morning, the Queen asked the girl how she found her sleeping arrangements. The girl replied, "I am afraid that I slept miserably because there were stones under my mattress, and I am bruised all over. Thank you for your hospitality, though, my Queen."

The Queen and prince smiled and knew that they had found a real princess, and the castle was overjoyed at the impending marriage. Two days later, the prince married the princess, and the two lived for many happy years together.

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